

TECHNICAL BACKGROUND SHEET ON
THE SILVER DOLLAR

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The silver dollar was established by the Mint Act of April 2, 1792. The coin in use now is the one first authorized by the Act of January 18, 1837, fixing the pure silver content at 90 per cent of its total weight, the remainder being copper. The coin weighs 412.5 grains, which is .8594 of a troy ounce and .9429 of the avoirdupois, ounce. The troy ounce is approximately a tenth greater than the avoirdupois ounce.

Before 1837 a slightly heavier coin (416 grains) was used. But from its first minting in 1794 the United States silver dollar has contained, and continues to contain, the same amount of silver -- slightly more than 77 and a third hundredths (.77343) of a troy ounce. At the current price for silver of one dollar and 29 and a quarter cents (\$1.29292), the silver dollar is worth exactly \$1.

The new silver dollar issue will be a further coinage of the "Peace" dollar. Some 190 million of these dollars were minted in 1921-1928 and 1934-1935. Since then there has been no new minting of them. Current coinage law requires that all United States coins now being minted be dated 1964, the date the new silver dollar will bear.

The Peace dollar commemorates the declaration of peace among the United States, Germany and Austria following the end of World War I. One side shows a female head, with a tiara of light rays. This side bears across the top the inscription Liberty and, in the lower half, In God We Trust, and date. The other side shows an eagle perched on a mountain top, holding an olive branch in its talons, the light rays of a new dawn rising from below. Across the top are the inscriptions, United States of America and E Pluribus Unum. In the lower half are the words One Dollar, and, at the bottom, the word Peace.

The new silver dollars are being made with \$600,000 included in the Mint's expenditure authority for Fiscal Year 1965. This expires on June 30. Production of the new dollars will be on a 24 hour a day basis, so that as many as possible can be made before the end of June. The \$600,000 covers manufacturing costs only, and does not include the cost of the silver or the copper content of the coins.

Since coinage of silver dollars began in 1794, 855,611,127 standard silver dollars have been made. This excludes 35,965,924 "trade dollars" of 420 grains, minted during the 1870s for use abroad, chiefly in the Orient.

The Treasury has a stock of some 3 million silver dollars, left when the Treasury ceased on March 25, 1964 to redeem silver certificates in silver dollars. Most of these pieces have special numismatic value, and no equitable way has been found for distributing them. For this reason, their release would not add to the silver dollars in circulation, because they would be taken up by coin dealers and collectors.

The Treasury now redeems silver certificates in silver bullion, at the San Francisco Assay Office and at the New York Assay Office, at the price of \$1.292929292 per ounce of silver.

May, 1965

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